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ABSTRACT

A study identified non-technical skills cited by employers as being either necessary or desirable for obtaining employment in the entry-level professional job market. Also collected was preliminary information concerning the extent to which the identified employability skills are outcomes of the postsecondary general studies curriculum. For the first part of the study, 48 empolyers in the San Francisco Bay area and the Salt Lake City area were interviewed to obtain their priorities. For the second part, six educators from four-year postsecondary institutions completed questionnaires designed to generate information about potential usefulness of the study outcomes. Non-technical skill requirements named by employers were of two types--functional skills, especially in the communication (interpersonal) and persuasion categories, and adaptive skills, covering a wide range of attitudes, personality traits, and work habits. Educators' responses to the employers' skill priorities suggested that such information is welcomed by educators, but a communication gap exists. Employability of their graduates was a concern but not a high priority among faculty, an attitude reflected in the curriculum. The most significant barrier to implementing greater opportunities for skill development was attitudinal. (The employer interview form, employer data, and educator questionnaire are appended.) (YLB)

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NON-TECHNICAL SKILL REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRY-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

A report of the Experience-based Education Implementation Research Project

Submitted by

Carol Murphy and Lynn Jenks

November 1982

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

In 1981 the Experience-Based Education Implementation Research project completed a study on the uses of field-based learning activities in post-secondary humanities and social science courses. Project activities included (1) a descriptive study of selected postsecondary courses using field-based activities, (2) a study of the implementation requirements for field-based activities, and (3) an investigation of the faculty-perceived impact of these learning activities on themselves, on their students, and their institutions.[1]

One of the outcomes of last year's study was a listing of specific skills that instructors claimed their students acquired in these field-based courses. The skills identified by faculty were grouped into four categories:

- Non-technical skills (e.g., counseling, research, problem solving, listening, critical thinking).
- Integration or synthesis of content and process (e.g., blend academic and real; evaluate theoretical knowledge in practical setting; apply classroom learning).
- Subject matter skills (e.g., museum procedures; historic preservation; archaeology techniques; publishing; editorial skills; perspective on content; intensive knowledge of problem area).
- Career-related skills (e.g., how an agency runs; bureaucratic functioning; appropriate work behavior; resume writing and interviewing).

All of these skills are important for students to develop as a part of their career preparation and all four categories are listed in the various classification systems of employability characteristics discussed by Chatham et al.[2]

The field-based courses that were investigated in this study were a part of the general studies curriculum at four year colleges.[3] It was clear that both the success and the appeal of this type of course to students was

related to their concern about future employment and their belief that experience in the field would help them in today's competitive job market. The number of students involved in internship and cooperative education programs has increased over the past few years, and "students in these programs are concerned about employability and the need to be able to meet the specific qualifications of employers."[4]

Studies show that humanities and social science graduates do get jobs, but it usually takes longer for them to find suitable employment than it does for graduates with specialized degrees. It is also more likely they will get a job in an area unrelated to their college major. This situation has prompted a concern on the part of both students and instructors about the issue of employability, and attempts are being made to evaluate the general studies curriculum in terms of its ability to provide students with both the technical and non-technical skills needed for successful job performance.

The job market dilemma that college graduates face is described by David Trivett,

> There is unemployment among college graduates and there are college graduates in jobs unrelated to their field of interest because they could get no other employment. While explanations for the declining vigor of the market for college graduates range from fairly simple to complex, research indicates that the most critical element in the employment situation for college graduates in the coming years appears to be the necessity for the absorption of some college educated persons into jobs which have not been traditionally filled by persons with a college education and that the adaptive skills of liberal arts education, not the specific skills of vocational education, are needed for this type of job market.[5]

The skills of liberal arts education that Trivett refers to have been defined in the literature as "generic," "liberal," "transferable," "adaptive," "functional," and "non-technical" skills. In this report, the term "non-technical" will be used to describe these generalized skills which are not specific to any particular job or workplace environment but rather

can be applied to a great number of tasks and jobs. Data were sought and will be presented here on two types of non-technical skills: functional and adaptive. Functional skills are the basic skills applied to tasks. They are part of larger actions rather than ends in themselves. Functional skills are used to solve new problems, to go beyond training and past experience. Sample functional skills are questioning, analyzing, organizing, listening, forecasting and decision-making. Adaptive skills describe the manner in which the employee interacts with his or her environment including relations to people, to organizations, to time and space, and to physical conditions. They are closely related to personality traits and when used in the appropriate environment, help the worker adapt to that environment. Adaptive skills are essential to become effective in any work or learning situation. Sample adaptive skills are flexibility, tactfulness, creativity and assertiveness.

The importance of these non-technical, transferable skills in obtaining suitable professional employment has been recognized by both educators and employers. But in order for this general advice to be more useful to students entering the job market and to faculty interested in promoting the development of non-technical skills in the college curriculum, certain questions need to be answered.

First, what are the non-technical skills that employers identify as necessary for entry-level professional employment? There are several lists of non-technical skills available in the literature, but no comprehensive list generated by employers is among them. Neal noted that "Research specifically concerning employer requirements for nontechnical behaviors and attitudes for employability is sparce and virtually nonexistent."[6] Such a list would provide a basis for discussion and hopefully for cooperative interaction between

educators and members of the business community.

The second question to be asked is how can students acquire these skills? Once the list of desirable skills and traits has been generated, it can be examined by educators--faculty, counselors, administrators--to determine which of the skills and traits are being developed in the general studies curriculum and which could be emphasized more. Of course this leads to other questions about teaching "skills" to university students, and about the appropriateness of certain teaching methodologies. Hopefully it will also raise the question of the purpose of instruction. Faculty members will be encouraged to ask "what are we teaching and why?"

Therefore, for the purpose of answering the first question and to offer an impetus for discussion of the second, we sought data from employers about the specific non-technical skills needed for entry-level professional employment. This job market, which is the traditional labor market for college graduates and which will be the focus of the study, is described by Chatham et al as "encompassing the attractive, well-paid, secure jobs with career ladders and prestige. In this primary labor market of advanced skills and escalating earnings talent, education, and experience are valued and rewarded."[7]

This information about marketable skills for students is needed by post-secondary instructors, counselors, placement officers, and administrators who are concerned about job opportunities for their graduates and about the career preparation currently offered to students in the general studies curriculum. Information about the kinds of skills valued by employers can be used by educators to: (1) make course design decisions; (2) counsel students about skills needed for competing in the job market, and (3) communicate more effectively with the private sector when collaborative or cooperative efforts are initiated.

High school teachers, counselors, and administrators can also make use of employers' input on important job skills, as many teenagers go directly into the labor force from secondary schools. And students of both secondary and postsecondary institutions could increase their knowledge of employer expectations by reviewing the study's findings.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Carol Murphy and Lynn Jenks, Integrating the Community and the Classroom: (1)A Sampler of Postsecondary Courses; (2) Implementing at the Postsecondary Level; (3) Instructors Describe the Results. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1981.

[2]Karen M. Chatham, James N. Johnson and Robert M. Peterson, The Concept of Employability: A Review of the Issues. San Francisco: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1981.

[3]The general studies curriculum includes courses in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and fine arts.

[4]William G. Neal, Nontechnical Behaviors and Attitudes for Employability of Students in Post-Secondary Cooperative Education. Cooperative Education Association Research Monograph, no.3, Northeastern University, Boston, 1981.

[5]David A. Trivett, "Jobs and College Graduates," ERIC Higher Education Research Currents, November 1975.

[6]Neal, Ibid.

[7]Chatham et al, Ibid.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Study Purpose

The primary purpose of the study was to identify and describe a set of non-technical skills that were cited by employers as being either necessary or desirable for obtaining employment in the entry-level professional job market. A secondary purpose was to collect preliminary information concerning the extent to which the identified employability skills are direct or indirect outcomes of the postsecondary general studies curriculum. Two study questions guided the original design of the investigation:

1. What are the non-technical skills needed for the entry-level professional job market?

2. Which of the non-technical skills identified in Study Question 1 are perceived by students and instructors as direct or indirect outcomes of the postsecondary general studies curriculum?

However, based on discussions with the project monitor, the questions were altered to eliminate student input to the second question in favor of expanding the information gathering from instructors. It was felt that this latter group could offer practical suggestions which would result in action-oriented recommendations that could influence a broad audience of employers and educators in both secondary and postsecondary classrooms, counseling centers and administrative offices. The second study question was revised to include three questions to educators: (a) which of the employer identified skills are outcomes of the curriculum; (b) what recommendations would you make to educators concerning employability skill development; and (c) what barriers exist that would impede employability development in the general studies curriculum.

The procedures and tasks that were completed for each of the two study questions are described below.

STUDY QUESTION 1: What are the non-technical skills needed for the entry-level professional job market?

Project staff completed a series of forty-eight interviews with employers to identify the characteristics of a successful applicant for entry-level professional employment. The term "entry-level professional employment" was used in the study to designate jobs at the beginning salary level that are filled by college graduates with no prior paid experience in the field. The job opportunities investigated were possible avenues of employment for general studies graduates and therefore did not include positions requiring specialized degrees of courses of study.

The jobs described in the study can be categorized as (1) apprenticeships where the job holder is at an "assistant" or "associate" level with a clear promotional track into a senior level position; (2) management trainee positions where the job holder is hired and placed in a 6-18 month training program for a junior management slot, and the career track to a senior management position is clearly outlined; (3) professional positions which are entry-level position with potential advancement within that category. They can be either management or nonmanagement positions.

Sample Selection

The appropriate source of information for Study Question 1 was the private and public sector--the businesses, industries and agencies that recruit, hire, train and promote employees in technical or professional jobs.

A cross section of employers in the San Francisco Bay Area was used as the main body of informants (n=41) with supplementary interviews from the Salt Lake City area (n=7). The interview sample included individuals at both large and small businesses and industries representing both the

public and private sectors. The employer sample of forty-eight persons represented the six largest fields of employment in the San Francisco Bay Area.* However, since the total number of interviews was small, the data were not compared statistically by size or type of employer.

TABLE I
Employer Interview Sample

Employment Sector	Employers Interviewed n=48	% of interviews
Services	17	35%
Transportation, Communication, & Utilities	15	31%
Retail	5	10%
Finance & Insurance	4	9%
Manufacturing	4	9%
Government	3	6%

Those employers contacted for interviews were selected at random from lists of San Francisco Bay Area private companies, nonprofit and service organizations, and government offices. The interviewees were (1) persons whose responsibilities included personnnel recruitment and training, and/or (2) people who supervised the employee positions being studied. Generally the employer contact was initiated with the personnel director or appropriate staff in the recruitment or training departments. When appropriate, this person referred the interviewer to the supervisor of the targeted position.

*These six categories were identified as the "Key Bay Area and San Francisco Employment Sectors: 1979" in a document from the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce.

A special attempt was made to gain adequate representation from each of the six employment categories according to the percentage of job holders in each category. Efforts to obtain interviews at certain companies or in certain employment fields were hampered because (1) the appropriate contact person was unavailable or unresponsive, (2) no jobs for entry-level professionals were available in the organization, and (3) the relevant individual had no time to participate in the interview. Many of the entry-level professional jobs in advertising, publishing or finance were filled by applicants or transfers from the parent company located elsewhere.

Sample responses of employers who did not grant interviews include:

"I don't have 30 minutes. This is a deadline world and to ask for 30 minutes is asking a lot."

"People have to have experience to get jobs here. The only real entry-level position is as a secretary--for women and men alike."

"We can't give out any information at this office. Everything must be cleared through the central office in Albany, New York."

Interview Process

The employer interviews were conducted at the work site and generally lasted from 30-60 minutes. Four members of the project staff conducted the interviews all of which were on a one-to-one basis. In addition to using a standardized interview instrument, the staff held periodic meetings to discuss and compare interviewer behaviors, interview questions, and employer responses, thus helping to assure consistent data collection procedures.

The interview questions were developed in part from previous work done at the Far West Laboratory on employer-identified work skills for entry-level non-professional positions. The work done by Karen Chatham

and Robert Peterson is especially relevant to this study.*

The interview instrument consisted of seven components of information: (1) Classification Data (2) Employment Requirements (3) The Job (4) Performance (5) Retention & Advancement (6) Educational Preparation and (7) The Employment Climate. The complete schedule of questions is included in Appendix A.

Although several lists of "liberal", "transferable", or "non-technical" skills have been devised by educators, by researchers, or cooperatively by educators and employers, they were not used as a part of the interview instrument. The purpose was to obtain the employers' priorities. Thus the information obtained in the interviews represents employability characteristics selected by employers without their having been prompted or influenced by any skill list or group discussion.

In order to minimize the possibility of the responses being incomplete or being biased by recent events on the job, several questions were asked during each interview that would require the respondents to re-state the non-technical skill requirements. Each interviewer completed a written record of the employer responses to each of the interview questions.

While the number of employers interviewed was small, only 48, there was a notable consistency in their responses which makes the data reliable for use by prospective job seekers, counselors and instructors as an indicator of employers' preferred skills and traits. It is true that these findings which are limited to non-technical job categories may not be uniformly applicable across all jobs. It is also true that there could be biases in the data, and it is possible that different responses might have been

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*Chatham, Karen. "Employment Practices Affecting Entry-level Workers," Far West Laboratory, San Francisco, 1982. Peterson, Robert. "Developing Good Workers," Far West Laboratory, San Francisco, 1982.

encountered if a different set of respondents had been used.

Data Compilation and Analysis

The responses to each question of the 48 interviews were coded and then compiled question by question in the seven categories of the interview instrument. A summary of the data is presented in Appendix B of this report.

For the purpose of data organization and display of the employer-identified functional skills, the skill cluster format devised by Munce and similar to that of Breen was adopted.* This classification schema is compatible with the employers' terminology, accommodates all the task-oriented functions described, and provides a useful context for discussing the implications of the data in terms of both job categories and learning outcomes.

No adequate format was available for displaying the adaptive skills in terms of type or clusters. Therefore certain categories and descriptors for these skills were devised and the employer responses were grouped accordingly.

Using the appropriate organizing frameworks, the information was synthesized and similarities and differences were noted among the various categories of data. The data compilation was reviewed and additional insights are offered in the Results section of this report.

STUDY QUESTION 2:	Which of the non-technical skills identified in study Question 1 are perceived by educators as direct or indirect outcomes of the postsecondary general studies curriculum? What recommendations do educators have regarding skill development in the general studies curriculum?

*Munce, John W. "Toward a Comprehensive Model of Clustering Skills," NSIEE Occasional Paper, 1981. Breen, Paul, "76 Career-Related Liberal Arts Skills," AAHE Bulletin, October, 1981.

Sample Selection

The information for this question was obtained from responses to questionnaire items by a selected group of six postsecondary educators from four-year postsecondary institutions: San Francisco State University, University of California at Berkeley, and University of California at Los Angeles. Each of the respondents is an experienced instructor with some additional background in administration. Names of the six respondents are listed in Appendix C.

Questionnaire Instrument

The data gathering instrument contained eight open-ended questions designed to help generate information about the potential usefulness of the study's outcomes and how they could be used by postsecondary educators. The first six questions requested information on the level of interest and involvement of general studies faculty in developing employability skills in their students, as well as faculty reactions to the employers' perceptions of needed skills. The last two questions sought recommendations for implementing the study's findings to improve/modify course designs, including identification of barriers and/or hindering conditions. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix D.

The results of the questionnaire were compiled, and the narrative data were analyzed. A summary of the findings is presented in the Results section of this report.

STUDY RESULTS

Employer Interviews

While the number of employers we interviewed was small, only 48, there was a notable consistency in the responses which makes the data reliable for use by prospective job seekers, counselors and instructors as an indicator of employers' preferred skills and traits. It is true that these findings which are limited to non-technical job categories may not be uniformly applicable across all jobs. It is also true that there could be biases in the data, and it is possible that different responses might have been encountered if a different set of respondents had been used.

The results of the interview data will be presented in three parts: (1) the skills and attitudes identified by employers as important factors in obtaining professional employment; (2) employers' advice to college students; and (3) employers' advice to educators.

1. Employers' Non-technical Skill Priorities. Although several lists of "liberal", "transferable", or "non-technical" skills have been devised by educators, by researchers, or cooperatively by educators and employers, they were not used as a part of the interview instrument. The purpose was to obtain the employers' priorities. The result was a list of non-technical skill requirements that is unique in that it represents employability characteristics selected by the employers without their being prompted or influenced by any skill list or group discussion. The skills noted in the tables that follow are the verbatim responses of the employers. Their choice of words has been retained even though the description is sometimes rather specific to a certain job or workplace.

Not surprisingly, most of the employer-mentioned skills are found on the other lists.* The summary of the responses presented here includes an indication of the number of times the skills were mentioned by employers. In order to minimize the possibility of the responses being incomplete or being biased by recent events on the job, several questions were asked during each interview that would require the respondents to re-state the skill requirements.

Three types of skills are needed for successful job performance--adaptive, functional and specific content skills. However, since the focus of this inquiry was on the non-technical skill requirements, data will be presented on the two types of non-technical skills, functional and adaptive. For the purpose of data organization and display of the employer-identified functional skills, the skill cluster format devised by Munce and similar to that of Breen was adopted.** This classification schema is compatible with the employers' terminology, accommodates all the task-oriented functions described, and provides a useful context for discussing the implications of the data in terms of both job categories and learning outcomes. The functional skills listed in Table I represent a synthesis of employers' responses to four skill-related questions:

1. What are the qualifications for the position?
2. What are the critical differences between those who get hired and those who do not?
3. What skills are needed to perform the job tasks successfully?
4. If the job market gets tighter, what skills and traits will be most valued?

Employer responses to each of the above questions are reported in Appendix B.

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*Munce, John W. "Toward a Comprehensive Model of Clustering Skills," NSIEE Occasional Paper, 1981. Breen, Paul, "76 Career-Related Liberal Arts Skills," AAHE Bulletin, October, 1981.

**Ibid.

TABLE I
FUNCTIONAL SKILLS REQUIRED FOR ENTRY-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT*

COMMUNICATION & PERSUASION (116)
exchange, transmission and expression of knowledge and ideas

communication (28)
writing (28)
verbal communication (23)
listening (10)
training (4)
selling ability (4)
language (4)
interviewing (3)
asking questions (2)
making presentations (2)
negotiating (2)
thinking on one's feet (2)
conversational ability
dealing with public
public speaking
teaching

ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT (57)
direct and guide a group in completing tasks and attaining goals

problem solving (15)
time management (8)
decisionmaking (7)
leadership (5)
meet deadlines (4)
supervision (3)
ability to motivate (2)
organization (2)
coordination (2)
administration
ability to put theory into practice
ability to delegate
apply policies
give directions
assume responsibility
task discrimination
interpret policies
set priorities

RESEARCH & INVESTIGATION (38)
the search for specific knowledge

analyze (13)
research (9)
reading (5)
data gathering (4)
critical thinking (2)
data analysis (2)
observing
outline assumptions
theoretical skills

HUMAN SERVICE (37)
attend to physical, mental or social needs of people

interpersonal skills (24)
group process (4)
sensitivity to needs (4)
empathize (2)
counseling (2)
involvement in public activities

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (31)
arrange and retrieve data, knowledge, ideas

math skills (10)
organize information (10)
information management (4)
recordkeeping (4)
attention to detail (2)
logical ability

DESIGN & PLANNING (13)
imagine the future and describe a process for creating it

anticipate problems (3)
plan (3)
conceptualize (2)
design programs (2)
anticipate consequences of action
recruit new ideas
visual thinking

*Number of multiple responses indicated in parentheses

TABLE II
ADAPTIVE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR ENTRY-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT*

APTITUDE (19)
capacity for learning

learns fast (9)
intelligent (4)
informed (3)
academic orientation
intuitive
sharp

ATTITUDE (62)
toward self
characteristics of general outlook, personal values, goals, motivation

positive (8)
mature (4)
open minded (2)
realistic (2)
idealistic
objective
professional
willing to learn
proper attitude

toward others
indicators of social values

altruistic
tolerant of cultural differences
social commitment
social concern
sensitive to lifestyle differences
values self-motivated people

toward work
indicators of work orientation, work values

interest in work (8)
commitment to job (7)
willing to work overtime (6)
desire to work in field (5)
willing to be trained (3)
belief in agency (2)
dedicated (2)
belief that work is meaningful
sensitivity to job
willing to hold low status job

SELF MANAGEMENT (218)
personal style & appearance

assertive (11)
good appearance (8)
motivated (8)
self-promoting (8)
self-presentation (8)
aggressive (7)
energetic (7)
flexible (7)
adaptable (6)
articulate (6)
confident (6)
creative (6)
dependable (5)
enthusiastic (5)
patient (5)
responsible (5)
ambitious (4)
independent (4)
persevering (4)
cheerful (3)
inquisitive (3)
sincere (3)
determined (2)
efficient (2)
alert
clearheaded
disciplined
neat
non-perfectionist
sense of humor
stable
thick-skinned
versatile

interpersonal style

tactful (21)
outgoing (9)
ability to get along with others (7)
friendly (7)
cooperative (6)
compatible (4)
responsive (3)
hospitable (3)
public relations (2)
put people at ease (2)
charismatic
even-tempered
handles difficult social situations
handles self well
helpful
inspires participation
inspires confidence
makes a good impression
people-oriented
presence
sensitive to authenticity
understands people

WORK HABITS (57)
characteristics of work performance, work orientation

understands teamwork (7)
precise (6)
handles pressure (5)
handles stress (4)
handles conflict (3)
self-directed (3)
understands work environment (3)
accepts criticism (2)
adheres to schedule (2)
follows through (2)
good work habits (2)
handles setbacks well (2)
hardworking (2)
makes extra effort (2)
takes risks (2)
task-oriented (2)
good judgment
generates ideas
gives others credit
goal-oriented
productive
punctual
results-oriented
takes initiative

*Number of multiple responses indicated in parentheses

The summary of adaptive skills named by employers for the same four questions are listed in Table II. Again, for the purposes of data display and also to facilitate subsequent discussion of these skills in terms of type as well as each individual trait, the employer responses were organized according to the four categories of aptitude, attitude, self-management and work habits.

It is clear from the employers' responses that both types of skills, functional and adaptive, are needed. There is also a definite indication of employers' preference for certain types of these skills. Almost 40% of the functional skill responses are in the "communication and persuasion" category. This is over twice the number of responses for the next category. The adaptive skills named by employers cover a wide range of attitudes, personality traits and work habits. Without a job-oriented context, many of them seem abstract or subjective, but in fact most of these skills were described in terms of job performance, not personality. For example, a "non-perfectionist" and "quick learner" was needed to meet heavy production deadlines, and only a "self-motivated, aggressive and determined" person would qualify to be a sales representative.

If job seekers were to take employers at their word and orient themselves accordingly, which skills and traits should they acquire? The "top ten" functional and adaptive skills preferred by the employers are summarized in TABLE III.

TABLE III
TOP TEN NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS NAMED BY EMPLOYERS
(n = 48)

FUNCTIONAL		ADAPTIVE	
Communication	28	Tactful	21
Writing	28	Assertive	11
Verbal skills	23	Outgoing	9
Interpersonal skills	24	Fast learner	9
Problem solving	15	Positive attitude	8
Analysis	13	Interested in work	8
Listening	10	Good appearance	8
Math skills	10	Motivated	8
Organize information	10	Self-promoting	8
Research	9	Good self-presentation	8

Which Skills Are Most Important? It is a relatively straightforward task to list the types of preferred skills, but it is more difficult to determine the relationship between the two types of skills. While the interview instrument was not designed to provide data on the comparative value of the skills, the responses to two of the questions offer some clues as to the relative merits of the skills:

1. What is the critical difference between those who get hired for this position and those who do not?
2. If the job market gets tighter, which of the skills you have named will be most valued?

Although experience and self-presentation in the interview were important factors, the majority of the respondents said the critical difference in hiring was the applicant's non-technical skills. Most employers mentioned at least one non-technical skill, and many listed more than one. Only 5 of the 48 employers cited task-specific skills as the critical factor in hiring. Some employers commented that coursework was not as important as certain abilities, attitudes or experience. Job experience or extracurricular activities were accepted by many employers as evidence of the qualities they were seeking, i.e. leadership, problem-solving, positive attitude about work.

TABLE IV

WHAT IS THE CRITICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE WHO GET HIRED AND THOSE WHO DO NOT?
(n = 48)

SKILLS		63
Adaptive*	34	
Functional**	24	
Task-specific	5	
INTERVIEW PRESENTATION		15
EXPERIENCE		14

*Adaptive skills mentioned more than once: commitment, interest, initiative, fitting in, assertiveness, enthusiasm, and intelligence.

**Functional skills mentioned more than once: communication, interpersonal skills, meeting deadlines, ability to answer questions.

Some of the respondents noted that the desired combination of skills and characteristics could be demonstrated by the applicant during the job interview through good verbal presentation, a positive and professional attitude and a sincere interest in the job or company.

Toward the end of the interview, Question 2 was asked in order to determine which skill(s) employers considered most valuable for an applicant to have in view of the current overall job market situation. This question, although more general in nature than the first one, elicited a similar response in that both types of non-technical skills were listed as being important. (TABLE V) The number of functional skills named for the second question, however, was almost twice that of the first. But in each case the two most frequently mentioned functional skills were communication and interpersonal skills.

TABLE V
IF THE JOB MARKET GETS TIGHTER, WHICH OF THE SKILLS YOU HAVE NAMED WILL BE MOST VALUED?
(n=48)

FUNCTIONAL	43	Skills mentioned more than once: communication, interpersonal skills, analysis, writing, verbal ability, research and ability to sell.
ADAPTIVE	31	Skills mentioned more than once: good self-presentation, aggressive, energetic, sensitive, assertive, quick learner, articulate, and desire to work.
TASK-SPECIFIC	6	None mentioned more than once.

What Skills Are Developed On the Job? The relationship between the two types of skills can be further explored by considering employers' responses to the question of which skills are developed on-the-job. Twenty-eight (28) employers offered training in technical or job specific skills which for the most part involved knowledge about the policies or procedures of the company. Thirty-two (32) employers

trained for specific functional skills. It is interesting that of the fifteen different functional skills mentioned in TABLE VI, seven are in the category of organization management. This is not surprising since some of the jobs described were management trainee positions. But it also may be an indication of an implied hierarchy in the functional skills with the more basic skills of writing, verbal communication, and simple problem-solving as entry-level skills and with administration, management and supervision as the more advanced skills developed through training or experience.

Not one adaptive skill was cited as part of a training program. As several employers put it, "we can't teach personality," and "they have to have the appropriate personality ahead of time." So the adaptive skills are not a formal part of any training program, although some of those relating to interpersonal style and work habits may in fact be informally acquired on the job.

TABLE VI
WHICH SKILLS ARE DEVELOPED ON THE JOB?
(n=48)

FUNCTIONAL		TECHNICAL/TASK SPECIFIC	
Management	8	Technical skills (unspecified)	9
Supervision	5	Information about the company	9
Writing	4	Use of equipment	2
Organization	3	Retail procedures	2
Communication	2	Computer skills	2
Selling	1	Knowledge of the product	2
Research	1	Labor laws	1
Conflict management	1	Public safety	1
Listening	1		28
Administration	1		
Budget	1		
Group dynamics	1		
Counseling	1		
Interviewing	1		
Time management	1		
	32		

What Skill-Related Problems Do Employees Have? Adaptive skills are, however, a crucial part of the review and promotion process. When employers were asked about the types of problems they encountered with entry-level professionals, they cited 41 adaptive skill deficiencies as opposed to only 21 functional skill deficiencies. (Table VII)

TABLE VII
WHAT KINDS OF PROBLEMS DO YOU HAVE WITH NEW, ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEES?
(n=48)

FUNCTIONAL SKILL PROBLEMS*	ADAPTIVE SKILL PROBLEMS*
21 responses	41 responses
Lack of interpersonal skills (6)	Unwilling to do extra work (4)
Unable to meet deadlines (5)	Negative attitude (3)
Unable to set priorities	Tardiness (3)
Unable to delegate	Does not understand the demands of business environment (3)
Inconsistent leadership style	Laziness (2)
Inattentive to detail	Interpersonal conflict (2)
Unable to write letters	Unprofessional (2)
Lack of organization skills	Unable to learn quickly enough
Poor problem-solving ability	Doing personal work on company time
Failure to acquire needed information	Does not know what is expected
Poor writing	Does not anticipate enough
Lack of research and analysis skills	Does not have personal goals
	Gets discouraged
	Gets bored
	Violates company policy
	Works too slowly
	Self-centered
	Morale problem
	Poor concentration
	Irresponsible
	Job burnout
	Personal problems
	Inflexible
	Lacks follow through
	Unable to fit in
	Unwilling to do drudge work
	Unable to work without structure
	Unable to correct deficiencies
	Lacks precision

*Number of multiple responses indicated in parentheses.

Both types of non-technical skill areas play a key role in decisions about promotions. Employees mentioned 57 adaptive skills that were important for promotion as opposed to only 18 functional skills. (Table VIII) It is clear from these responses that these employers' decisions about promotion are most often based on the employee's work habits--on his or her productivity, initiative, and willingness to make an extra effort.

TABLE VIII
NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS RELATED TO PROMOTION

FUNCTIONAL (18)	ADAPTIVE (57)
Organization Management(11)	Work Habits (32)
Assume responsibility (3)	Make extra effort (7)
Organization (3)	Productive (7)
Management (2)	Take initiative (6)
Fundraising	Offers ideas (3)
Make decisions	Accept criticism (2)
Meet deadlines	Independent judgment (2)
	Accurate
Communication and Persuasion(3)	Goal-oriented
Selling (2)	Handles stress
Write	Hardworking
	Results-oriented
Design and Planning(3)	
Anticipate needs	Self-Management (17)
Design programs	Efficient (3)
Recruit new products	Adaptable (2)
	Aggressive (2)
Research and Investigation(1)	Ambitious (2)
Analyze	Flexible (2)
	Get along with others (2)
	Motivated (2)
	Competitive
	Enthusiastic
	Attitude (5)
	Willing to work overtime (2)
	Commitment
	Dedicated
	Interest in work
	Aptitude (3)
	Be a learner (2)
	Ability to do the job

The employers' responses to these questions indicate that adaptive skills are a critical factor both in getting a job and in on-the-job performance. They also show that although some may be informally acquired on-the-job, they are not a part of any formal training program. Students as prospective job applicants should be aware of the importance of these skills before they begin their job search efforts. They should be encouraged by faculty or advsors to seek opportunities either on-campus or off-campus that will help them acquire or practice these skills.

2. Employers' Advice to Students. The bulk of suggestions, or advice, offered to students by employers can be summarized in the following four points:

1. Get a "practical" minor such as computers or business or take a summer workshop or some specialized courses focusing on the acquisition of some task-specific skills.

2. Develop certain skills which will be "transferable" to many job situations. These will enhance the applicant's overall appeal or "marketability" at the outset and will also help in the long run as the job-specific tasks change or a person undergoes a change in career.

3. Develop good job search and interviewing skills. Some of those mentioned were reseaching the current job market opportunities and employment trends.

4. Get experience. Internships, coop ed programs, field-study courses, volunteer work and extra-curricular activities were mentioned as helpful transitions to the demands of the world of work.

The attitude of employers when offering this advice was one of support and encouragement for obtaining a degree in general studies. While many suggested supplementing a general studies background with specialized courses, employers did not advise students to avoid the general studies program. In fact, many of them saw value in these courses both in terms of immediate and long term benefits because this type of program helps students develop non-technical or transferable functional skills. And these skills, although they are sometimes more difficult to identify or assess,

are important not only for getting a job but also for on-the-job training, advancement and later career change.

In addition to characterizing successful applicants in terms of specific skills and attitudes, the employers were also asked about the quality of the preparation for the world of work that students were receiving in college. On the whole, they gave favorable responses regarding the preparation in content areas. They were, however, greatly disappointed in the applicants' writing skills. Negative comments referred to the applicants' grammatical deficiencies as well as a lack of "practical" or business writing skills. The point was made that writing a term paper or essay exam is not the same as writing advertising copy or a business letter. The other skill deficiencies cited were in verbal communication and problem-solving. Many employers reported they were prepared to offer on-the-job training for specific job-related skills but they expected applicants to have already developed good written and verbal communication skills. The practical side of these general skills was repeatedly stressed as being very important, and students were advised to get experience in applying their skills in a real work environment.

Along the same lines, employers reported another deficiency in college applicants--the lack of understanding of the "processes and demands of the workplace." They complained that students do not know how to act in a business environment, they're often unrealistic and have poor work attitudes. Their view was that too much "theory" becomes a liability if students don't know how to put it into practice.

> "Students don't realize that publishing isn't academic; it is really a profit-making business."

> "They say that any college graduate can be a manager, but that isn't so. This is a business and you need a good business head. I don't think that colleges even bring that up."

The employers used their strongest language in describing this lack of preparation for the world of work. They called it "horrible", "distressing", "poor" and "disappointing."

> "Academe doesn't teach what real life is about. They should teach getting to work on time."
>
> "Colleges need to teach them to come to work on time, dress appropriately and put in a good day's work."

Employers also stressed the importance of preparing for the job interview and "selling yourself" during that interview.

> "Liberal arts majors make poor sales pitches for themselves. They expect the interviewers to guess how wonderful they are."

Part of that "selling yourself" includes good personal appearance, knowing what you want to do, demonstrating an interest in the company as well as a willingness to work.

> "Some people have blown a lot of money on a college education. That alone is not enough. You have to be willing to work. You have to walk in, sit down and say 'I want to work.'"

Additional employer suggestions relating to job search and career planning are included in Appendix B, Section VIId.

3. Employers' Advice to Educators. Colleges have many purposes and students have many different reasons for attending them, including intellectual development, personal fulfillment, a broad understanding of various fields of study, and learning for its own sake. But if making a successful transition into a satisfying and productive career is also a desirable outcome, then planning a course of post-secondary study should take into account the perceptions and expectations of employers and business people.

In addition to offering advice to students on how to prepare for a successful transition to the environment of the workplace, the employers also made some suggestions to educators involved in program planning and implementation. Their recommendations, which covered a wide range of the postsecondary preparation process included:

1. Help students develop or improve their non-technical skills.
2. Help students develop job search and self-presentation skills.
3. Help students define their career goals in terms of current and projected job market trends.
4. Help students develop an awareness of the demands of the workplace.
5. Offer students opportunities to apply their skills through internships or work experience.
6. Provide certain business-oriented courses in the general studies curriculum.
7. Work cooperatively with representatives of business and industry on employment-related issues.

Educators' Responses

A group of six postsecondary faculty and administrators were asked to respond to the employers' skill priorities.* Their views were sought on the importance of the issue of non-technical skill development as well as the usefulness of the data from the employer interviews. They also made some recommendations as to how these non-technical skills could be developed within existing curriculum guidelines. At the same time, they noted some of the conditions or obstacles which might influence an instructional strategy aimed at non-technical skill development.

1. Reactions to the Employer Data. Each of the respondents felt the study data offered information that could stimulate stronger interest in employability development for students in the general studies curriculum.

> "The results support the importance of the general studies curriculum for success in almost any job area."
>
> "The results suggest that educational goals and the interests of prospective employers are in many ways consonant."

According to one respondent, "the trick is to tie employability concerns to academic concerns"-- a "trick" that is not too difficult since the functional skills sought by employers are close to the standard goals of universities. Each of the educators felt that at least some of the employers' skill priorities--verbal and written communication, problem solving, critical thinking, analysis and organization of materials--"seem to correspond quite closely to the general features of a liberal education." And this

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*The six respondents are faculty members or program administrators in the general studies divisions of four-year universities. See Appendix C for their names and institutions.

correspondence would seem to indicate there are "extensive grounds for discussion between academics and employers about the conduct of higher education."

These post-secondary educators felt the results were valid and consistent with their own "impressions of necessary job skills" or with findings from studies conducted at their own institution. One respondent said that the results reported here seemed "accurate and realistic" but business has failed to convey these needs to prospective employees by overstressing the need for specialized technical experts. And "if businesses were actively recruiting general studies graduates, seniors would have a less defeatist attitude about what they have to offer the business world."

Although the data were favorably responded to as being "excellent, balanced, sensible, and encouraging" certain qualifying comments were also made: (1) faculty would need more specific information to help them focus on the issue; (2) employers' definitions of certain skills may not be the same as faculty's; (3) there is probably a "gap between the board room where liberal skills are appreciated and the personnel office where recruiters are more narrow-minded."

The content of these remarks seems to suggest that while information about employers' views and requirements is welcomed by educators, there is a communication gap between the two sectors which will be narrowed only as a result of direct exchanges and cooperative efforts between them.

2. Educators' Concerns about Employability. All six respondents felt there was some concern about the employability of their graduates among faculty and administrators, but it was not a high priority at the present time.

"It is not a major concern and will not be even if it should."

The concern may grow, however, out of necessity if general studies programs continue to lose students.

> "More and more liberal arts faculty are concerned with this issue because they don't want to lose all their students to the school of business. And students now believe they need a degree in business to get a job."

But for the most part, this issue loses out to concerns about departmental turf." And in many institutions it is easy for faculty to avoid the issue by saying it is non-academic or by assuming someone else in administration or student services is responding to the need.

> "The concept of 'skills' is not a popular one here. 'Abilities' seems a bit less loaded."

When they were asked if this issue of employability skills <u>should</u> be a major concern of faculty, the respondents all said yes but added certain qualifiers, such "it should be a concern insofar as it fits into the curriculum," or "as long as it corresponds to the subject matter already being taught." There was, however, general agreement that many of these skills are being acquired by students.

> "Fortunately the prejudice of faculties against 'career' and 'work' isn't fatal--because a good liberal education happens to be a good career education."

It was also proposed that employability should be a major concern only for <u>some</u> faculty, and these faculty "should be assigned that concern by the institution. This could take the form of a campus-wide board or committee similar in scope to committees which already exist for library or computer services, research, or community service."

The point was also made that rather than attempting to make the issue a major concern, "perhaps a more realistic and compatible way to address the problem is to help students translate their general studies skills to non-technical employability skills. And there are many equivalencies."

And finally, one respondent observed that "many institutions are already concerned with the skills, but not necessarily with their development.

> "Colleges and universities are very concerned about communication skills, but they are not necessarily committed to teaching them."

Can these skills be taught? Which ones belong in the curriculum? What does it take to help students acquire or develop them?

3. Skill Development--What Can Be Done? All six educators agreed that some of the non-technical skills, both adaptive and functional, are developed in the curriculum, but that "institutions have not clearly formulated their application to the job market." In some cases it is only a question of analyzing the course activities and outcomes and translating them into the language of non-technical skills. And some courses could "with minimal revision" develop specific skills.

When asked which skills are most appropriate for development in which courses in the general studies curricula, the educators gave the following responses quoted in Table IX.

TABLE IX
SKILL DEVELOPMENT--WHAT CAN BE DONE?
SIX EDUCATORS RESPOND

"Successfully completing college, it seems to me, requires developing such functional skills as time management, setting priorities, and meeting deadlines. Any course requiring term papers would develop information management skills and most research and investigation skills. We are weakest in developing human service and design and planning skills."

"In terms of communication skills, courses in English and Speech and Communication Studies most obviously meet these needs. Organizational, interpersonal and small group communication are courses taught in speech communication which deals with most of the skills listed in the first four functional skill categories and with most of the adaptive skills which are not directly work-related. Many courses in sociology and psychology develop research and information gathering skills. Courses in philosophy are particularly geared toward developing critical thinking skills."

"Some institutions actually have courses with competency objectives in such things as problem solving and critical thinking. But most will require matchups like: communication/persuasion in speech departments; research/investigation in history and English; human service in psychology, counseling and social work; information management in business. But organizational management and design/planning may not actually have sources in any coursework at some campuses."

"The basic functional skills of writing, reasoning, and organization of data form some part of every college course if properly designed and conducted. Every course requiring written examinations and term papers necessarily demands exercises in writing skills; seminars offer opportunities for sharpening verbal skills as well as cooperative activities; organization of data and shaping arguments are essential both in classroom discussions and in written exercises. It is not always the case that instructors emphasize sufficiently the importance of clear writing and reasoning, but this lack is becoming more and more a topic for discussion and revision within the university."

"If individual departments recognized their responsibility for the general education of all students, then the communication skills, problem solving skills, and information organizing skills could be taught across the disciplines. In fact, all of the top ten functional skills would be good candidates for campus-wide attention, with the exception of interpersonal skills. There is a real reluctance by faculty members to address this as an explicit educational goal."

"Of course instructors should be concerned with communication skills problem solving, research and analysis. Formal oral presentations and group work would help develop personality skills and assertiveness and would actually make the teaching less demanding for the section leader. Setting up debates would require the students to take a stand (decision making), meet strict guidelines as to time and form, and seek to be persuasive (assertive). Since debates are generally conducted by teams, it would require division of labor, cooperation, and compromise. It would make learning active rather than passive. I see this format as applicable to any academic subject. The design of assignments is crucial. Too many assignments seem disconnected from any practical application."

These responses indicate that many of the non-technical skills could be developed in several different courses or even across disciplines. They also include some interesting process suggestions for faculty, i.e. the importance of classroom discussions, essay exams, term papers, definite deadlines, oral presentations, group work---all suggestions related not only to skill development but also to active learning and practical application.

This theme was reiterated when the respondents were asked about including the development of employability skills in the actual course design. Their responses indicated that it was not a question of course design but rather one of attitude, general instructional approach, and sometimes of including a specific learning activity or event. Course re-design would not only meet with faculty resistance and possible administrative difficulties, but also would be unnecessary since many of the skills are already being taught.

What is needed is increased awareness by both faculty and students of how these non-technical skills enhance the students' employability.

> "Faculty need to relate the importance of these skills beyond the discipline, to life and work in general."
>
> "I don't think it's a question of adding much to the existing curriculum but rather of communicating to faculty that what they are teaching is important on the job. That's what's missing now in liberal studies. Students believe that technical knowledge is more important than writing and speaking effectively. They don't see how writing a term paper involves skills they will use on a job."

In addition to recognizing they have these skills, students also need to understand "how to communicate to employers the valuable skills they have."

As a part of the instructional approach, several of the respondents suggested including some field-based learning activities in the course. These activities would give the students a chance to apply their skills and to discover for themselves what the employers value and how "transferable" their academic skills are.

TABLE X
EDUCATORS RECOMMEND: INCLUDE FIELD-BASED ACTIVITIES

"Where possible, have students apply the skills via internship or field studies or invite guest speakers and panels from business."

"The means for accomplishing competency outcomes ought to be a calculated, individualized mix of experiential and traditional learning modes. In order to implement this approach I would recommend much greater use of learning opportunities in the workplace. In institutions where many (or even most) students have jobs, we are losing a major opportunity to utilize the workplace as an internship."

"In terms of course design, I would recommend getting students involved in academic work as opposed to academic study; that is, get students involved right away in research projects, policy studies, lab experiments etc and include that major piece of academic business--manuscript and memo preparation. If students were subsequently given workplace experience in non-academic settings--through internships--then the students themselves could make informed judgments about the transferability of academic skills to non-academic workplaces."

"I have designed a one unit class called a 'mentorship' which can be attached to any three unit course in the humanities. For the mentorship, the student identifies someone in a career of interest to him or her and works with that person on a project in which they apply what is learned in the classroom to a work setting. The mentorship is designed for lower division students who are trying to identify a career. It can then be followed by an internship in which on-the-job experience is gained. I would take this approach rather than suggesting faculty re-design their courses around employability skills."

The following two recommended instructional "scenarios" illustrate the theme of the respondents' recommendations regarding course structure and process. The first is from a Professor of History and the second from a Professor of Humanities.

TABLE XI
SKILL DEVELOPMENT--WHAT CAN BE DONE?
TWO INSTRUCTIONAL SCENARIOS

"Set up classes around a set of important questions, e.g. why the Roman Empire fell. Present competing interpretations, relevant background, pertinent evidence. Then require the students to use the material to "solve" the question in a paper and an oral presentation. Rather than just a grade at the end of the class, there ought to be constant feedback from the teaching assistant, the professor and possibly other students. Professors would be available for "interviews." Students who failed to ask the right questions would not get the important information. Students would be graded for the persuasiveness of their position, not its closeness to prevailing academic opinion. The entire class would be less professor-centered than student-centered. Learning would seem more practical and applicable to other problems and situations."

"I would recommend that critical writing be made part of the requirements of all substantial courses without regard to subject field. But even this demand would be less than effective if the instructor is not willing to subject students' writing to careful scrutiny and comment. Courses should be designed so as to allow written exercises to be related intrinsically to educational goals and also to allow adequate time for consultation, review, and revision as required.

Students respond well to group assignments, and I would suggest that discussion courses provide opportunities for students to design and carry out assignments for oral reports or research projects. Lecture courses should make provision for discussion sections if at all possible. In short, designs should attempt to incorporate as many and as varied opportunities for students to generate projects of their own as the general structure of the course can accommodate."

4. What Are the Barriers? The barriers or impediments to implementing above suggestions include considerations about time and money, training, administrative requirements, and teacher autonomy. But the most significant barrier, according to these educators, was attitudinal: "At least 80% of the need is a change in attitudes." Many faculty and administrators feel employability development is not appropriate to the university, that it is distinct from academic development.

"One obstacle is the general lack of receptiveness of university teachers to the notion that they should try to train students for the job market. I don't beleive that the obstacle is as insurmountable as it might seem, largely because it is built on stereotyped ideas, mostly unexamined in a long time. But also because most faculty members are concerned about their students' welfare and will respond cooperatively if it is pointed out that a good deal of what they are doing already can be of help in preparing students for future employment."

"Large research universities pride themselves on being more "pure" at heart than the business world into which most of their students will graduate. This has several consequences, one of which is that faculty members do not like to see themselves as workers and are reluctant to look at academic work as a craft which they themselves practice and have learned to practice. Without a willingness to see what they do as work, it is hard for faculty members in these institutions to positively identify with the employers who will be hiring their students. They think they are in an adversary relationship rather than a collaborative one. In colleges and universities under stress, of course, some of this reluctance will come unglued. Declining enrollments, student activism, declining financial resources can all bring an institution to a position of great vulnerability, within which all sorts of new ideas can be seen as promising, including the development of employability skills."

Money and faculty time, which are always in short supply, are especially so right now. The respondents recognized that some of the suggestions they made will require additional resources, for example, providing supervision of student writing or including discussion sections to supplement lecture sessions. It was also recognized that students have a limited amount of time for each class.

"Another barrier is the extreme shortage of time which students have to devote to each particular class. The result is superficial, sloppy work which professors come to accept as the norm. Students ought to be forced to redo and redo until the result is excellent. In this way they would learn what excellence means."

Some financial support may also be required for training of teachers or teachers' assistants to supervise the critical writing exercises or the off-campus learning activities.

Administrative constraints associated with accrediting policies and course outline regulations were mentioned but did not seem to pose much of a problem. One respondent pointed out that instructors were "perfectly free to act without special permission and implement course changes without anyone except their students noticing it." But the other side of this "freedom" is that while the "courses are usually the province of individual faculty members, that alone is a barrier to having them emphasize anything other than their own perceptions."

One final and very important obstacle that was cited is faculty's lack of experience in dealing with the business world, of knowing its expectations and practices. This situation, one respondent felt, creates an artificial environment for the students which makes them slow to adapt to the demands of the business world.

> "I am more and more convinced that academic performance is related to life performance, but that the academic environment is extremely artificial. There is far too much emphasis on test-taking in our society. Performance should be rewarded, not test taking skill. Businesses and law firms and hospitals do not give tests to get things done. They do not pit people against each other, but rather make them work with each other. Nothing critical is done in spans of one hour or three hours.
>
> One barrier to making general studies more useful in teaching employment skills is that academics generally have no firsthand experience in the business world themselves. Professors ought to be brought into the job placement problem themselves. They ought to be encouraged to spend summers and sabbaticals in the business world."

All of the above insights into the reality of the academic world underscore the need for postsecondary faculty to engage in cooperative efforts with representatives of the business community for the purpose of exchanging views on the nature of the employability skills issue and of defining some mutually satisfactory means of approaching its resolution.

In summary, the educators' responses to the employers' skill priorities included the following points:

- The lists of non-technical skills named by the employers were consistent with their own impressions of necessary job skills.
- The employability of college graduates is not a major concern among faculty and administrators, but the issue is attracting more widespread attention among them.
- Many of the non-technical skills are already being developed in the general studies curriculum.
- Course re-design is not needed to teach non-technical skills.
- Faculty should be encouraged to examine their instructional procedures or processes and to emphasize writing skills, oral communication, group work, and more active learning.
- Faculty should be willing to subject students' communication skills (writing, speaking) to extensive scrutiny and comment.
- Field-based activities help students acquire and apply the functional and adaptive skills needed in the workplace.
- The academic environment can be made less "artificial" by decreasing emphasis on test-taking, encouraging cooperative student projects, and by expanding, when possible, the time frames for learning activities.

DISCUSSION

One of the purposes for generating a list of employers' preferred non-technical skills was to use it as a basis for discussing the employability issue with faculty and administrators. If the educators' responses included in this study are an indication of the opinions and attitudes of faculty members in general, the list of skills, togetner with the employers' recommendations, do in fact provide a basis for dialogue between the two groups.

A summary of the suggestions employers made to educators includes the following:

1. Help students develop or improve their non-technical skills.
2. Help students develop job search and self-presentation skills.
3. Help students define their career goals in terms of current and projected job market trends.
4. Help students develop an awareness of the demands of the workplace.
5. Offer students opportunities to apply their skills through internships or work experience.
6. Provide certain business-oriented courses in the general studies curriculum.
7. Work cooperatively with representatives of business and industry on employment-related issues.

For their part, the educators accepted the employers' list of non-technical skills as being realistic and valid. They agreed that students need opportunities to apply their skills and to learn about the workplace (#4 and 5 above), and they recommended the use of field-based activities and internships to supplement academic learning. They also agreed that students need information about job search skills and job market trends (#2 and 3 above), but felt this was the responsibility of "some kind of

institution-wide agency or committee." The educator respondents also recognized the need to work together with business on this issue (#7 above): "Faculty could benefit from increased contact with representatives of the business community."

Educators and faculty agree that acquiring employability skills is a desirable part of the student's college experience. But the educators emphasized that while "certain non-technical skills are already being developed in the curriculum" not <u>all</u> of these skills are appropriate as course content material. Their overall message--although they were all concerned with the employability issue--was not "teach for employability." They recommended that faculty "identify the skills related to the academic work involved and teach those well." They felt that students could get the remaining skills they needed through other coursework, extracurricular activities or work experience.

In addition to including some field-based learning experiences, their proposed strategies or "process" suggestions to faculty for planning and monitoring <u>quality</u> skill development in their courses included:

- Examine your instructional procedures for the purpose of increasing the emphasis on writing, oral communication, group work and more active learning.
- Subject students' communication skills (writing, speaking) to extensive scrutiny and comment.
- Make the academic environment less "artificial" by decreasing emphasis on test-taking, by encouraging cooperative student projects, and by expanding, when possible, the time frames for learning activities.

One of the educators proposed a kind of exercise for instructors which makes use of the non-technical skill lists and forms a basis for the skill identification and development process:

> "Colleges are workplaces for faculty members, and they should be encouraged to identify the skills required to do the work

> of an academic. I would have faculty assess the skills related to their own work in terms of the sets of skills which the employers identified. I think the commonalities would suggest a number of ways to proceed. Then, I would have them communicate this information to students in their courses, and assess the present level of ability of their students. Having gone through that process, I think there would be a set of skills which would be crucial to the pursuit of academic goals, to employability development, and may also be underdeveloped in the student population. If faculty members could focus on these--and alert students to pick up the others somewhere else--we'd be way ahead."

In their assessment of the likelihood of a favorable response by their colleagues to the employability skills issue, educators warned that "the most significant barrier to planned development of employability skills is a negative faculty attitude." They felt strongly that "course re-design is not the way to go," but that some of the above-mentioned awareness strategies and practical exercises would help focus faculty attention on developing non-technical skills. They maintained, however, that this skill development process is not the responsibility of the course instructor alone. It is, rather, a shared responsibility with both the student services agencies and the students themselves. It is the students who are ultimately responsible for their own curriculum choices and career planning, and they should not, according to these faculty, depend on anyone else for information, guidance or direction about the current job market or skills they need.

The perspectives of these faculty members on the issue of employability, the place of non-technical skills in the academic curriculum, and the shared responsibility of faculty, counselors, students and employers for their development raise some interesting questions which could be explored further with other postsecondary faculty or could provide the basis for a forum on the development of employability skills at postsecondary institutions.

It seems, however, at this point that it is no longer necessary to discuss <u>which</u> skills should be developed but rather to decide <u>how</u> they

can best be developed. Certain functional skills are already included as direct or indirect outcomes of the general studies curriculum, but the quality of these skills seems to be doubtful to both educators and employers. Another question that could be explored in terms of specific skills and specific courses is which, if any, of the adaptive skills should be taught? And also what is the relationship of these non-technical skills to a worker's overall productivity on the job? This study focused on the skills needed to gain and advance in a job; it did not investigate the relationship of these skills to increased productivity.

It would also seem appropriate and desirable if further reflection on this study's results and on the overall question of skill development would prompt college instructors and administrators to consider the question, what is the purpose of instruction? It might be an appropriate time for both advocates and staff of general studies or liberal arts programs to think about the future goals and direction of those programs in terms of several contextual considerations: the overall mission statement of the institution; the educational needs of the students; the current and projected employment situation; the impact of the new technology and information services. What actions, changes, or trade-offs are needed--not just as a reaction to the dictates of external forces or events but as part of an anticipatory or proactive planning process that will ensure the most efficient use of educational resources and at the same time allow institutions and faculty to fulfill their mandate for academic service to the community.

APPENDICES

A. Employer Interview

B. Employer Data

C. Educator Consultants

D. Educator Questionnaire

APPENDIX A

EMPLOYER INTERVIEW

I. CLASSIFICATION DATA (for supervisor)

a. Name: Phone Number:

b. Job title:

c. Brief description of organization (purpose):

d. Brief description of own job (main task, level of responsibility):

e. Years in organization; years in present position:

II. EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS (for entry level employee)

a. What are the job titles of professional entry level jobs you supervise? (Pick one to pursue and focus interview on exploring that job.)

b. What are the qualifications for this position? Is there a job description? (Probe for both stated and unstated qualifications--education, skills, experience, and personal attributes.)

c. What are the critical differences between those who get hired and those who do not?

d. How did you determine who is most qualified?

III. THE JOB

a. What level on the hierarchy is this position? Who does the person report to? Who do they supervise?

b. What is the salary?

c. How would you describe the "prime function" of this person?

d. What are some of the tasks that the person will be doing?

e. What are the skills needed to perform these tasks successfully? (Probe for both technical and non-technical skills.)

f. What type of attitude or personality traits (adaptive skills) are needed on the job? (Probe for their importance in relation to the technical and functional skills mentioned above.)

g. Are any of the above-listed skills or traits developed on the job? Formally or informally?

IV. PERFORMANCE

a. Who does the performance evaluation?

b. What is the process? (Include how conducted and subjective or objective basis for assessment)

c. What are the most typical kinds of performance problems?

d. What actions are needed to solve these problems? Are they in process?

V. RETENTION & ADVANCEMENT

a. What are the promotional opportunities for this position? Is there a career ladder?

b. What are the critical differences between those who get promoted and those who do not?

c. Is there much turnover on this job? If so, why or if not, why not?

d. Are people fired? Why? Whose expectation is unfulfilled--the employer's or employee's? (Probe for which behaviors lead to termination.)

VI. EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION (seeking employer opinion)

a. How would you assess the quality of applicants you are getting for this job? List assets and deficiencies of applicants.

b. How would you assess the work done by the colleges to prepare students for the world of work?

c. What could be done to improve preparation?

d. Do you have a relationship with any college or program? Describe.

VII. THE EMPLOYMENT CLIMATE (seeking employer opinion and projection)

a. How would you assess the current climate for the entry-level job seeker in this field?

b. What changes do you see ahead?

c. If the job market gets tighter, what skills and traits listed above will be most valued?

d. What advice would you give to college grad job seekers in this field?

APPENDIX B

EMPLOYER DATA

Employer responses to the interview questions are reported here under the seven major data categories: (1) Classification Data, (2) Employment Requirements, (3) The Job, (4) Performance, (5) Retention and Advancement, (6) Educational Preparation, and (7) The Employment Climate.

I. CLASSIFICATION DATA

The purpose of this section was to identify the interviewee's place of business and to determine his or her primary on-the-job tasks.

Forty eight persons were interviewed from the six major employment sectors in the San Francisco Bay Area. Seventeen represented Service industries, and fifteen were from the Transportation, Communication, and Utilities sector. Representation from the other four major employment sectors included Retail (5), Finance and Insurance (4), Manufacturing (4), and Government (3). Table 1 lists the companies that participated in the study.

The employer representatives we interviewed were current or past supervisors of entry-level professionals. Some were involved in campus recruiting or management training programs. In a brief description of their main tasks, 33 employers reported management or supervision, 17 indicated recruiting or hiring, and 12 specified training. Some respondents had responsibilities in more than one task category.

II. EMPLOYMENT REQUIREMENTS

a. Job Titles: What Are the Entry-level Professional Jobs?

The jobs described by the employers interviewed can be categorized as (1) apprenticeships where the job holder is at an "assistant" or "associate" level with a clear promotional track into a senior-level position; (2) management

trainee positions where the job holder is hired and placed in a 6-18 month training program for a junior management slot, and the career track to a senior management position is clearly outlined; (3) professional positions which are entry-level positions with potential advancement within that category. They can be either management or non-management positions. A list of job titles identified by employers as entry-level positions is given in Table 2.

Table 1
LIST OF EMPLOYERS INTERVIEWED

SERVICE (non-profit education, community service agencies; hotels; health services) (17)

BaronData
Big Brothers
Boys' Club
Center for the Study of Services
Children's Hospital
Community Music Center
Community Training & Development Program
Family Service Agency
Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development
Girl Scout Council
Holiday Inn
Hyatt Regency
Operation Concern
Sheraton
United Way
Volunteer Bureau
YMCA

TRANSPORTATION, COMMUNICATION & UTILITIES (15)

Envirotech
KRON TV
Metropolitan Transportation Commission (2)
Miller Freeman Publications
Mountain Bell
Mountain Fuel
Pacific Telephone
Pan American World Airways
Pitman Learning
Sea-Land Service, Inc.
Southern Pacific Transportation (2)
Utah Power & Light
Wadsworth Publishing Co.

RETAIL (5)

Emporium
I. Magnin
Liberty House
Macy's
World Book-Childcraft International

FINANCE & INSURANCE (4)

Blue Cross
Industrial Indemnity Insurance Co.
Rockridge Health Care Plan
Wells Fargo Bank

MANUFACTURING (4)

Chevron (2)
Fluor Mining & Metal
Hewlett-Packard

GOVERNMENT (3)

City of Berkeley
Utah Energy Office
Utah Department of Transportation

Table 2
JOB TITLES BY CATEGORY

APPRENTICESHIPS (18)	PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS (27)
Personnel Assistant (3)	Accountant (2)
Accounting Assistant (2)	Auditor (2)
Assistant Buyer (2)	Banking Services Officer
Research Assistant (2)	Branch Operations Officer
Public Affairs Assistant (2)	Case Worker
Assistant Production Editor	Community Relations Representative
Assistant Systems Associate	Credit Manager
Assistant Controller	Customer Service Account Representative
Associate Account Executive	Flight Attendant
Editorial Assistant	Labor Relations Officer
Program Associate	Patient Advocate
Social Work Associate	Personal Banking Officer
	Program Coordinator
	Program Director
MANAGEMENT TRAINEE (10)	Programmer Analyst
	Project Director
Management Trainee (5)	Public Service Coordinator
Department Management Trainee (2)	Recruiter
Assistant Manager	Registrar
Corporate Management Trainee	Resource Specialist
Executive Trainee	Sales Representative
	Therapist
	Trainer
	Transit Coordinator
	Underwriter

b. What Are the Qualifications for these Positions?

The responses were sought and have been organized into four basic categories: (1)educational qualifications; (2)experience; (3) functional skills; (4)adaptive skills.

Educational Qualifications. The jobs reviewed in the study were entry-level professional positions for which college graduates would be applying. Thirty-one of the 48 employers mentioned a college degree as a firm requirement. Some required a particular major or coursework in a specified area but most of these were willilng to consider "equivalencies" in experience, e.g., "If the degree is not in hotel management, work

experience is mandatory," "A four year degree or the equivalent of five years experience managing volunteers is needed." Some employers noted that some combination of education and experience was acceptable, e.g., "a minimum of two years of college and equivalent experience." Only six respondents indicated grade point average was a consideration in hiring.

Experience. Twenty-six of the 48 jobs discussed included some reference to experience as an important aspect of job seekers' qualifications. The types of experience mentioned included:

- o Part-time work, internships, volunteering, campus activities
- o Job experience in a relevant field (sometimes accepted in lieu of college requirements); and
- o Experiences in a specific field which demonstrate attainment of skills needed for job performance, e.g., knowledge of steno and court reporting, understanding of particular computer hardware/software operations.

Functional Skills. Employers identified 28 different functional skills as important qualifications for the positions described. Several of these were named by more than one respondent for a total of 93 skills (see Table 3).

Adaptive Skills. Forty-seven different adaptive skills were cited as important qualilficatios for applicants, but there were very few multiple responses, and the total number of adaptive skills named was fifty seven.

The above four categories of response were suggested to employers by the interviewer, but they were not pressed for resposes in each area and some employers mentioned only one type of requirement.

c. What Is the Critical Difference between Those Who Get Hired and Those Who Do Not?

This question was asked as a follow-up to the previous one which listed all the important qualifications for these entry-level positions. We wanted employers to identify the single most critical factor in the

Table 3
NON-TECHNICAL SKILL QUALIFICATIONS

Functional (93)	Adaptive (57)	
Communication (verbal)(19)	Tactful (3)	Initiative
Writing (13)	Creative (2)	Inspires confidence
Interpersonal skills (6)	Diplomatic (2)	Intuitive
Listening (5)	Good appearance (2)	Makes good impression
Analysis (4)	Positive attitude (2)	Makes extra effort
Decisionmaking (4)	Self-presentation (2)	Motivated
Problem solving (4)	Social skills (2)	Neat
Interviewing (3)	Teamwork (2)	Objective
Language (3)	Work overtime (2)	Patient
Leadership (3)	Adaptable	Personable
Negotiating (3)	Aggressive	People-oriented
Organizational ability (3)	Altruistic	Precise
Ability to ask questions (2)	Ambitious	Productive
Meet deadlines (2)	Articulate	Realistic
Planning (2)	Assertive	Reliable
Research (2)	Confident	Sensitive to needs of others
Selling ability (2)	Cooperative	Willing to be trained
Supervision (2)	Curious	Willing to hold low status job
Training (2)	Dependable	Willing to work
Ability to delegate	Desire to work in field	
Ability to motivate others	Enthusiastic	
Critical thinking	Flexible	
Make schedules	Friendly	
Organize data	Good judgment	
Reading	Handles pressure	
Recordkeeping	Handles self well	
Recruiting	Handles stress	
Set priorities	Informed	

hiring process. As Table 4 indicates, several employers listed more than one "critical difference" but the clear majority focused on the non-technical skills. Although interview presentation and experience were important factors, the majority of respondented cited at least one non-technical skill as making the critical difference in hiring. Only five employers cited task-specific skills as the critical factor. Some employers commented that coursework was not as important as certain abilities, attitudes, or experiences. Some employers mentioned that job experience or extracurricular activities were evidence of the qualities they were seeking, i.e., leadership, problem-solving, positive attitude about work.

Some of the respondents noted that the desired combination of skills and characteristics could be demonstrated by the applicant during the job interview through good verbal presentation, a positive and professional attitude and a sincere interest in the job or company.

Table 4*
WHAT IS THE CRITICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THOSE WHO GET HIRED AND THOSE WHO DO NOT?
(n=48)

SKILLS		63
Adaptive	34	
Functional	24	
Task specific	5	
INTERVIEW PRESENTATION		15
EXPERIENCE		14

Adaptive skills mentioned more than once: commitment, interest, initiative, fitting in, assertiveness, enthusiasm, and intelligence.

Functional skills mentioned more than once: communication, interpersonal skills, meeting deadlines, ability to answer questions.

*This Table appeared in the Results section of this report as TABLE IV.

d. How Do You Determine the Most Qualified Applicant?

Employers mentioned resumes, applications, cover letters, interviews, and company visits as part of the overall screening process. Several characteristics or an effective resume were offered: It should not be longer than one page; it should have good grammar, be sensible, wellwritten and results-oriented, i.e., demonstrate the candidate's accomplishments; it should be attractive and show experience compatible to the job sought. The quality of the resume and cover letter is important to employers, not just as a gauge for experience, but as a means of showing personal qualities and skills, such as attention to detail, positive self-presentation, and

ability to communicate in writing.

However, in all cases, it was the interview process that was the key determinant in selecting applicants. Employers used the interview to:

- o Test how seriously the applicant has taken the job and interviews by preparing for it and by knowing something about the company.
- o Explore how clear the applicant is about his or her goals, and how capable in using verbal communication skills.
- o Observe how much the person attends to the details of self-presentation including dress, politeness and personal mannerisms.
- o See how much the person uses the chance to promote him or herself and make the most of past experiences.
- o Seek out other, specific qualities of a person that are important for doing the job.
- o Assess the person's level of interpersonal skills and responses under pressure conditions.
- o Determine the applicant's problem-solving and decision-making abilities by presenting hypothetical situations.

Twelve companies reported using a multiple-step hiring process requiring more than one interview. This usually meant a campus interview followed by an on-site visit by the applicant. Candidates are initially screened by a personnel representative or recruiter. Some of the employers who do more extensive interviewing commented that it was a worthwhile process in that it ensured getting the best possible candidates for the job and reduced job turnover.

Most of the companies using a multiple-step process are large, heavily bureaucratized corporations, national in scope, e.g.,Chevron, Wells Fargo Bank, United Way, Macy's, Hyatt Hotels, and Pan American Airlines.

Only seven employers reported using objective evaluation tools such as tests or rating sheets to evaluate candidates.

III. THE JOB

a. Supervision

All but six of the jobs discussed are supervised by the immediate supervisor who himself reports to a higher level supervisor. In the remaining six jobs, all non-profit agencies, the person reports directly to the agency head. Seven of the positions entail supervising non-clerical subordinates, and five jobs have clerical support staff to supervise.

b. Salary

The responses were divided into high, moderate, and low salary categories. The salaries listed in Table 5 represent an annual figure. When a salary was reported as a given range of income, it was placed within the appropriate overall range, depending on where the greatest part of the job range was located. One employer declined to give a salary range for the position described.

Table 5
SALARY RANGES
n=48

LOW	$10,000 - $16,000	18
MODERATE	$16,000 - $22,000	19
HIGH	$22,000 and up	10
NO RESPONSE		1

A cross tabulation of income by job types provides additional information.

Table 6
COMPARISON OF INCOME WITH JOB TYPE

Job Type / Income Level	A Apprenticeships	B Management Trainee	C Professional Position
Low	25% (3)	62% (5)	37% (10)
Moderate	58% (7)	25% (2)	37% (10)
High	17% (2)	13% (1)	26% (7)

Table 6 shows that the largest proportion (70%) of the highest paying jobs are in Group C, professional positions, and the largest proportion (62%) of the lowest paying jobs are management trainees. Over half of the apprenticeship category is in the moderate category. Overall, the professional positions have the most even spread of salary.

c. Job Tasks

Table 7 shows the range of activities performed by entry-level professionals as reported by employers. As a list it summarizes the tasks of the forty-eight positions included in the study. The responses have been organized to correspond to the six functional skill categories used throughout the study to aggregate the data into areas or clusters of competences. Consistent application of this organizing framework makes it easier to compare data across questions.

Table 7
ENTRY-LEVEL TASKS AS REPORTED BY EMPLOYERS

SKILL CATEGORY	TASK	
Communication & Persuasion (27)	Answer questions	Negotiate with labor
	Attend meetings	Proofread
	Communicate w/ clients	Provide technical assistance
	Disseminate policies	
	Document problems	Recruit
	Edit	Sell services
	Exchange information	Serve as liaison
	Give workshops	Train
	Handle public affairs, public relations	Visit sites
		Write contracts
	Interview	Write reports
	Listen to customers	Write news items
	Maintain client contact	Work with public officials
	Make presentations	
	Make sales calls	
Organization Management (27)	Analyze problems	Interpret policies to employees
	Assure compliance with regulations	Learn management duties
	Analyze jobs	Make recommendations
	Administer contract	Monitor financial operations
	Adhere to budget	
	Arrange schedules	Manage people
	Coordinate	Manage purchases
	Classify jobs	Organize workload
	Distribute orders	Organize schedules
	Evaluate data, performance	Oversee hiring
		Propose solutions
	Fundraising	Resolve grievances
	Give directions	Select volunteers
	Handle grievances	Solve problems
		Supervise
Research & Investigation (13)	Analyze information	Gather research data
	Assess needs	Gather case information
	Conduct survey	Learn company policy
	Conduct research	Manage research study
	Examine ideas	Observe
	Follow up leads	Research materials
	Gather interview data	
Human Service (3)	Counsel	Motivate staff
	Facilitate interaction	
Information Management (12)	Complete forms	Maintain inventory
	Determine financial risks	Order materials
	Handle equipment	Organize materials
	Keep records	Organize information
	Monitor legislation	Set prices
	Maintain statistics	Work with budgets
Design & Planning (7)	Design products	Develop a training program
	Design a system	Design recruitment strategy
	Design a research plan	Forecast service demand
		Plan

d. What Are the Functional and Adaptive Skills Needed for these Jobs?

Employers were asked to specify which non-technical skills were needed to perform the above-named job tasks successfully. The responses were separated into functional and adaptive categories and the results are presented in Tables 8 and 9. The terms and phrases are the verbatim responses of the employers. The summary of responses includes an indication of the number of times the skills were mentioned by employers. These two tables, although similar to TABLES I and II in the Results section of this report, represent the responses to the question alone; the other tables represent a composite of responses to four skill-related questions.

It is clear from the employers' responses that both types of skills, functional and adaptive, are needed. There is also a definite indication of employers' preference for certain types of these skills. Thirty-five per cent of the functional skill responses are in the "communication and persuasion" category. The top two categories represent 56% of the total responses. The adaptive skills named by employers cover a wide range of attitudes, personality traits and work habits. Without a job-oriented context, many of them seem abstract or subjective, but in fact most of these skills were described in terms of job performance, not personality. For example, a "non-perfectionist" and "quick learner" was needed to meet heavy production deadlines, and only a "self-motivated, aggressive and determined" person would qualify to be a sales representative.

e. Which Skills Are Developed on the Job?

The relationship between the two types of non-technical skills can be explored by considering employers' responses to the question of which skills are developed on the job. Twenty-eight employers offered training in technical or job-specific skills which for the most part involved knowledge about the

Table 8
FUNCTIONAL SKILLS REQUIRED FOR ENTRY-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT*
(responses to question IIIe only)

COMMUNICATION & PERSUASION (79)
exchange, transmission and expression of knowledge and ideas

writing (21)
verbal communication (16)
communication (15)
listening (9)
interviewing (2)
language (2)
making presentations (2)
selling ability (2)
thinking on one's feet (2)
training (2)
asking questions
conversational ability
dealing with the public
negotiating
public speaking
teaching

ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT (51)
direct and guide a group in completing tasks and attaining goals

problem solving (13)
time management (8)
decisionmaking (5)
leadership (5)
meet deadlines (3)
supervision (2)
ability to motivate (2)
management (2)
coordination (2)
administration
ability to put theory into practice
ability to delegate
apply policies
give directions
assume responsibility
task discrimination
interpret policies
set priorities

RESEARCH & INVESTIGATION (31)
the search for specific knowledge

analyze (10)
research (5)
reading (5)
data gathering (4)
critical thinking (2)
data analysis (2)
observing
outline assumptions
theoretical skills

HUMAN SERVICE (29)
attend to physical, mental or social needs of people

interpersonal skills (18)
group process (4)
sensitivity to needs (3)
counseling (2)
empathize
involvement in public activities

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (28)
arrange and retrieve data, knowledge, ideas

math skills (10)
organize information (8)
information management (4)
recordkeeping (3)
attention to detail (2)
logical ability

DESIGN & PLANNING (10)
imagine the future and describe a process for creating it

anticipate problems (3)
conceptualize (2)
anticipate consequences of action
design programs
plan
recruit new ideas
visual thinking

*Number of multiple responses indicated in parentheses

Table 9
ADAPTIVE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR ENTRY-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT*
(responses to question IIIf only)

APTITUDE (8)

capacity for learning

- learns fast (4)
- intelligent (2)
- informed
- sharp

ATTITUDE (27)

Toward Self

characteristics of general outlook, personal values, goals, motivation

- positive (4)
- mature (3)
- objective
- open-minded
- willing to learn
- proper attitude

Toward Others

indicators of social values

- sensitive to lifestyle differences
- social commitment
- social concern
- values self-motivated people

Toward Work

indicators of work orientation, work values

- willing to work overtime (4)
- commitment to job (3)
- interest in work (3)
- belief that work is meaningful
- willing to hold low status job
- willing to be trained

SELF MANAGEMENT (136)

personal style & appearance

- motivated (9)
- assertive (7)
- aggressive (5)
- flexible (5)
- adaptable (4)
- confident (4)
- creative (4)
- good appearance (4)
- patient (4)
- responsible (4)
- cheerful (3)
- energetic (3)
- inquisitive (3)
- persevering (3)
- ambitious (2)
- dependable (2)
- determined (2)
- efficient (2)
- independent (2)
- articulate
- disciplined
- enthusiastic
- non-perfectionist
- self-promoting
- sense of humor
- sincere
- stable
- thick-skinned
- trustworthy

interpersonal style

- tactful (13)
- get along w/others (9)
- outgoing (6)
- friendly (5)
- cooperative (4)
- hospitable (3)
- responsive (3)
- public relations (2)
- puts people at ease (2)
- understands people (2)
- charismatic
- compatible
- even-tempered
- helpful
- presence
- sensitive to authenticity

WORK HABITS (41)

characteristics of work performance, work orientation

- understands teamwork (6)
- takes initiative (5)
- handles pressure (4)
- handles stress (3)
- self-directed (3)
- accepts criticism (2)
- good work habits (2)
- handles setbacks (2)
- understands work environment (2)
- adheres to schedule
- follows through
- generates ideas
- gives others credit
- goal-oriented
- handles conflict
- makes extra effort
- precise
- punctual
- results-oriented
- takes risks
- task-oriented

*Number of multiple responses indicated in parentheses

policies or procedures of the company. Thirty-two employers trained for specific functional skills. It is interesting that of the 15 different functional skills mentioned in Table 10, seven are in the category of organization management. This is not surprising since some of the jobs described were management trainee positions. But it also may be an indication of an implied hierarchy in the functional skills with the more basic skills of writing, verbal communication, and simple problem-solving as entry-level skills and with administration, management and supervision as the more advanced skills developed through training or experience.

Not one adaptive skill was cited as part of a training program. As several employers put it, "we can't teach personality," and "they have to have the appropriate personality ahead of time." So the adaptive skills are not a formal part of any training program, although some of those relating to interpersonal style and work habits may in fact be informally acquired on the job.

TABLE 10*
WHICH SKILLS ARE DEVELOPED ON THE JOB?
(n=48)

FUNCTIONAL		TECHNICAL/TASK SPECIFIC	
Management	8	Technical skills (unspecified)	9
Supervision	5	Information about the company	9
Writing	4	Use of equipment	2
Organization	3	Retail procedures	2
Communication	2	Computer skills	2
Selling	1	Knowledge of the product	2
Research	1	Labor laws	1
Conflict management	1	Public safety	1
Listening	1		28
Administration	1		
Budget	1		
Group dynamics	1		
Counseling	1		
Interviewing	1		
Time management	1		
	32		

*This table appeared in the Results section of this report as TABLE VI.

IV. PERFORMANCE

Employers were asked several questions to determine: (1) what evaluation methods are used, (2) what kinds of performance problems occur on the job, and (3) how are they handled.

a. What Is the Evaluation Process?

Most of the positions discussed were evaluated by the immediate supervisor (39); five positions were reviewed by a team or by persons other than the immediate supervisor. One employer said there was no performance evaluation, and three did not respond.

Evaluation took place at varying intervals, the most common being annually (n=13). Five additional employers reviewed performance annually after intervals of probationary evaluations during the first year. Every six months was the rule for eight positions; four times a year for three others. One employee mentioned "lots of spot checking" with no definite time periods. Not all respondents reported frequency of evaluation.

In the view of employers, the evaluation process included some or all of the following: holding a conference with the employee, discussing the job description, using an evaluation instrument, and making a site visit to inspect performance. Several respondents (12) offered information about the purpose of the evaluation. They saw it as a method of career development (4), a means of allocating pay increases (7), and a way to identify and resolve productivity problems (1).

The evaluation processes reported by employers included varying degrees of employee involvement. Of the 24 respondents who outlined their specific evaluation methods, nine cited measuring performance against the employee's work plan or stated goals and objectives for the relevant time period; one

mentioned the job description; fourteen used a standard form. The evaluation forms described by employers rated employees on a combination of functional and adaptive skills. Some forms leaned heavily toward adaptive skills alone, e.g., one form listed "cooperativeness, dependability, initiative, and motivation." Most of the employers using standardized rating instruments are large, highly complex organizations with a personnel procedures which the immediate supervisor follows.

b. What Are Some Performance Problems?

When employers were asked about the types of problems they encountered with entry-level professionals, they cited 41 adaptive skill deficiencies as opposed to only 21 functional skill deficiencies. (Table 11) Many of these skill deficiencies relate to the workers' attitude or expectations of the job. As prospective job applicants, students should be aware of the importance of adaptive skills, both in getting and keeping a job, before they begin their job search efforts.

c. How Are Performance Problems Handled?

In general, employers cited two different approaches to handling performance problems: (1) disciplinary actions or (2) corrective procedures. Disciplinary actions include procedures to document the problem first and then to issue a series of "warnings" such as the five-step sequence of "oral warning, written warning, letter of reprimand, letter of suspension, termination." Fifteen employers reported using such disciplinary procedures. Several of them said employees are rarely let go, but rather that they self-select out or get transferred to another department.

Corrective actions involve more direct and active participation on the part of the employer. They include such techniques as counseling,

instruction or remedial help, and adjustment of work plans. Twelve employers used one or more of these corrective actions with their employees.

Table 11*
WHAT KINDS OF PROBLEMS DO YOU HAVE WITH NEW, ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEES?
(n=48)

FUNCTIONAL SKILL PROBLEMS	ADAPTIVE SKILL PROBLEMS
21 responses	41 responses
Lack of interpersonal skills (6)	Unwilling to do extra work (4)
Unable to meet deadlines (5)	Negative attitude (3)
Unable to set priorities	Tardiness (3)
Unable to delegate	Does not understand the demands of the business enviroment (3)
Inconsistent leadership style	Laziness (2)
Inattentive to detail	Interpersonal conflict (2)
Unable to write letters	Unprofessional (2)
Lack of organization skills	Unable to learn quickly enough
Poor problem-solving ability	Doing personal work on company time
Failure to acquire needed information	Does not know what is expected
Poor writing	Does not anticipate enough
Lack of research and analysis skills	Does not have personal goals
	Gets discouraged
	Gets bored
	Violates company policy
	Works too slowly
	Self-centered
	Morale problem
	Poor concentration
	Irresponsible
	Job burnout
	Personal problems
	Inflexible
	Lacks follow through
	Unable to fit in
	Unwilling to do drudge work
	Unable to work without structure
	Unable to correct deficiencies
	Lacks precision

*This table appeared in the Results section of this report as TABLE VII.

V. RETENTION AND ADVANCEMENT

a. What Are the Promotional Opportunities for these Positions?

Twenty-three employers said there was a definite career ladder for the position discussed. Twelve jobs were cited as simply having "mobility" without further explanation. Of the positions having a career ladder or other opportunities for mobility, the greatest number were in the field of Transportation, Communication and Utilities (n=13).

On the opposite side of mobility were jobs with limited opportunity and little chance for advancement. Ten employers rated their employees' jobs in this category, nine from Service organizations (eight non-profit, one profit) and one from Government. Of these ten respondents, four qualified opportunities as limited because there was no real career ladder, the next step being director of the organization; another respondent indicated budget cuts have eliminated intermediate positions; and five employers said advancement required a geographic move or additional education.

b. What Are the Critical Differences in Promotion?

In discussing why some employees get promoted and others do not, employers reported evaluating results in both qualitative and quantitative terms. Quantitative contributions by the employee included increased profit, more clients, additional time spent on the job, and assuming greater responsibility. Qualitative indicators included better job performance, increased knowledge of the job, and improved relationships with clients.

Demonstrating proficiency in specific non-technical skill areas influenced employees' chances for promotion. As shown in Table 12, fifty-seven adaptive skills were mentioned as important for promotion. According to the subcategories devised for the adaptive skills, the largest number of responses related to the employee's work habits (32); seventeen referred to the employee's

self-management style; five reflected attitude, and three concerned the employee's aptitude. Eighteen functional skills were named as important: eleven fell under the subheading of Organization Management; three were Communication and Persuasion; three were Design and Planning; and one was a Research skill.

It is clear from these responses that promotion is most often based on the employee's work habits, and most particularly on his or her productivity, initiative and willingness to make an extra effort.

> "Promotion means doing something extra, going beyond the well-defined parameters of the job, exercising independent judgment and getting along well with people."
>
> "Those who are promoted work above and beyond what is expected, put in longer hours or have great productivity."
>
> "People who really bear down and do it with some flair will advance the fastest."

c. Is There Much Turnover on the Job?

Twenty employers verified there was a lot of turnover on the job, but the responses varied: thirteen gave positive reasons such as people moving outside the company to new positions in their field or up a career ladder. Seven employers said the positions have a high initial attrition rate, so turnover is expected. Employers in this category were two publishers, one research laboratory, one book distributor,one hotel, and one non-profit organization.

Twenty-five positions had "internal" turnover as people were promoted or transferred within the company. It was pointed out that because of the tight job market, turnover is low and people are staying on the job.

Table 12
NON-TECHNICAL SKILLS RELATED TO PROMOTION

FUNCTIONAL (18)	ADAPTIVE (57)
Organization Management(11)	**Work Habits (32)**
Assume responsibility (3)	Make extra effort (7)
Organization (3)	Productive (7)
Management (2)	Take initiative (6)
Fundraising	Offers ideas (3)
Make decisions	Accept criticism (2)
Meet deadlines	Independent judgment (2)
	Accurate
Communication and Persuasion(3)	Goal-oriented
Selling (2)	Handles stress
Write	Hardworking
	Results-oriented
Design and Planning(3)	
Anticipate needs	**Self-Management (17)**
Design programs	Efficient (3)
Recruit new products	Adaptable (2)
	Aggressive (2)
Research and Investigation(1)	Ambitious (2)
Analyze	Flexible (2)
	Get along with others (2)
	Motivated (2)
	Competitive
	Enthusiastic
	Attitude (5)
	Willing to work overtime (2)
	Commitment
	Dedicated
	Interest in work
	Aptitude (3)
	Be a learner (2)
	Ability to do the job

d. Are Employees Fired?

In the relatively few instances where people were fired, the reasons given for dismissal were generally related to job performance although one employer did admit, "Sometimes it's to make room for someone else." Specific problems resulting in termination included "inability to communicate, not working to capacity, not dealing with the public diplomatically, different expectations about work, theft of tools, incompetence, not diversifying

into other areas, failure to relate to the job, client complaints, lateness unavailability, and personal problems."

Of the thirty five employers responding to this question, twenty nine said firing happened "very seldom, rarely, or almost never." Several employers observed the tendency of employees to select themselves out, thus precluding the need for firing. These respondents suggested people resign or voluntarily leave a job they cannot do or drop a training program if the nature of the job clashes with their previous expectations.

> "People usually quit rather than be fired. It is obvious early on they are not suited to the demand."
>
> "People leave if they realize it's not for them."

Two employers believed their initial screening process usually prevented hiring mistakes.

VI. EDUCATIONAL PREPARATION

Employers were asked several questions related to the strengths and weaknesses of applicants, the quality of their college preparation for the world of work, and ways educational insitutions might improve efforts to prepare students for successful employment.

a. How Well-qualified Are the Applicants?

In evaluating the abilities of persons applying for entry-level professional positions, 21 employers gave only positive responses while seven reported negative reactions. Eighteen others gave a balanced account, often listing together several favorable and several unfavorable characteristics and/or abilities. No descriptive evaluation was given by two respondents.

All strengths and weaknesses outlined by employers were compiled in two separate groupings. Of the total number of strengths identified by

respondents, twenty eight were adaptive skills, e.g., articulate, mature, knowledge of self and goals, good self-presentation; fourteen were functional skills with eight references to good communication abilities, including writing; and six represented experience or training in a job-related area.

The weaknesses reported by respondents included twenty-two functional skill deficiencies: twelve indicated problems with language or writing; others cited inadequate research skills and problem solving ability. Nineteen adaptive skill deficiencies were named, e.g., poor goal setting, inadequate self knowledge, weak self-presentation. And eight references were made to lack of practical or work experience.

Combining all employer opinions on applicant strengths, personal characteristics or qualities (adaptive skills) were mentioned twice as often as specific functional skills. In evaluating weaknesses, functional and adaptive skills were more equally cited--with functional skills only slightly higher in frequency.

b. How Well Are Colleges Preparing Students for the World of Work?

When asked how colleges were doing in preparing students for the world of work, 25 employers gave essentially critical opinions, suggesting one or more areas that needed,improvement, e.g., "They're doing a horrible job with basic reading and writing," "Colleges don't expose students enough to reality," "I wish education would focus on problem solving, information gathering, analysis." Basically positive comments were given by eight respondents, ranging in enthusiasm from "Okay," to "The schools are very fine."

Mixed reviews came from twelve other respondents who observed a variance from school-to-school or presented both positive and negative views as indicators of institutional effectiveness, e.g., "Coursework, OK, but not

prepared for business environment," "Colleges and trade schools have strong programs but have fallen short by not teaching students how to get a job." Three employers gave no evaluation of the role of educational institutions.

In reviewing specific areas where employers found institutions lacking in their preparation of students, functional skills were cited more often (24) than adaptive skills (13). Strong emphasis was placed on the need to improve writing and communication abilities. Employers also wanted schools to develop in students more realistic expectations about work and better work attitudes. The value of more task-specific skills was mentioned by three employers.

Eight respondents reported the need for schools to promote more "field-based knowledge," practical training for jobs," "exposure to reality," and "concrete experience." Six others cited the significance of more preparation "for the business environment," and "the realities of the world of work." Two comments addressed the importance of teaching job search skills, "how to investigate jobs and how to find them."

c. What Could Be Done To Improve Preparation?

In line with the above-mentioned deficiencies, employers made several suggestions to educators involved in program planning and implementation about what could be done to improve students' preparation for employment. Recommendations covered a wide range of the postsecondary preparation process and included:

1. Help students develop or improve their non-technical skills.
2. Help students develop job search and self-presentation skills.
3. Help students define their career goals in terms of curent and projected job market trends.

4. Help students develop an awareness of the demands of the workplace.

5. Offer students opportunities to apply their skills through internships or work experience.

6. Provide certain business-oriented courses in the general studies curriculum.

7. Work cooperatively with representatives of business and industry on employment-related issues.

Employers' advice to students involved their taking responsibility for some of the above-mentioned suggestions:

1. Acquire or improve functional skills (27 responses)

   "Write, write, write."

2. Gain job-related experience (19 responses)

   "Get a job. Don't just stay in the classroom."

3. Develop a good attitude and acquire adaptive skills (13 responses)

   "Develop patience and self-discipline. Don't be over eager."

   "Learn to work on a team, to be flexible, not to be a prima donna."

4. Acquire or improve job search skills (7 responses)

   "Research the companies and learn to present yourself better."

d. Do You Have a Relationship with a College?

Thirty-two employers indicated they had some relationship with at least one college program. Their association with educational institutions ranged from full internship programs (17) or on-campus recruitment (9) to occasional participation in campus events (6). Respondents who reported having a relationship with a college were generally pleased with the arrangement, e.g., "We learn from co-op students. They are very energetic." "Interns try to do a good job. They keep us honest."

VII. EMPLOYMENT CLIMATE

a. What is the Current Climate for the Entry-level Job Seeker?

Employers' descrilptions of employment prospects for entry-level applicants can be divided into three categories: difficult (not many openings); competitive (some positions but still an employer's market); and positive (opportunities available for good applicants).

Twenty employers described the current situation as difficult; it is an employer's market where "we can get experienced people right away" and "get good candidates to fill low paid positions." One employer reported that "two hundred people were interviewed for one position." Some currently have a freeze on hiring at their company: "we haven't hired in three years"; "except for computer experts and engineers we had a hiring freeze all last year." Two employers felt the situation was particularly difficult for liberal arts students who would have to "pursue their fields indirectly."

Reasons that were cited as contributing to the bleak picture include: "business is bad," "high unemployment," "declining federal support," "the field is shrinking," "public funding is cut," and "cutbacks in training programs."

The fourteen who described the market as competitive felt there were "limited opportunities to get or advance in a job, especially for the entry-level candidate who was competing with "older people, career change people with maturity and experience." Two employers stressed the importance of having certain skills in this tight market: "everyone must have particular skills to offer employers," "competition is tough especially when people do not have communication skills."

The more positive responses stressed that opportunities were available in certain fields for people with the "right preparation," experience and

maturity. This more optimistic outlook came from representatives of companies involved in electronics, information management, banking, energy and environment, retail, and large hotels. There was only one respondent from a non-profit agency in this group.

Table 13 shows the breakdown of employer assessments of the job market by job type. The overall job prospects for apprentice-type positions were defined as "difficult", but the outlook for management trainees was 50% positive.

Table 13
JOB CLIMATE BY JOB TYPE
n=48

Climate Desciptor	Apprenticeship	Management Trainee	Professional	Total
Difficult	60% (6)	30% (3)	41% (11)	20
Competitive	20% (2)	20% (2)	37% (10	14
Positive	20% (2)	50% (5)	22% (6)	13
	10	10	27	47*

*One interviewee offered no assessment

b. What Changes Are Ahead for the Job Market?

Employers were asked to speculate on how they see the job market changing in the near future. The responses ranged from a simple "no change" to a lengthy description of the influence of new technology and the type of applicant who will succeed in the changing market. The categories of responses are shown in Table 14.

The "negative" statements were made by employers who had characterized the current job market as "difficult" (6) or "competitive" (2) in the previous question. Several of their comments link their own situation

Table 14 PROJECTED JOB MARKET CHANGES n=48	
Uncertain, "hard to say"	6
Negative projection	8
Positive projection	11
No change	2
Change due to new technology	6
Change in staffing requirements	13
No response	2
	48

to the national economic and political situation: "With no change in the political arena, the field will decline"; "I expect to see a decline in the field unless political changes reverse the trend"; "The economic situation has made training programs impossible to sustain."

The "positive" comments reflected the view that "the market is opening up," "there will be growth," "expansion will be slow but will continue." The most positive outlook was held by an employer at an elecronics firm: "The company will double in the next two years." Five of these respondents had also given an optimistic appraisal of the current job market in the previous question.

Some respondents felt that as the role of computers is expanded in business, new opportunities will be created. No one felt the new technology would replace workers but that it would alter the services provided and require some specialized skills.

However, increased technical expertise was only one of the desirable attributes of future job applicants. Other characteristics that employers

felt would be needed or emphasized in the future job market include: experience (3), maturity (2), stability (2), professionalism (2), business-oriented (2), interest in the field, self-knowledge, focused, serious, positive approach, writing skills, career orientation, knowledge of the field and seeking meaningful employment.

c. In a Tight Job Market, What Skills and Traits Are Most Valued?

Employers were asked to single out the most important technical or non-technical skill or trait for obtaining employment in a tight market. The responses are presented in Table 15.

Table 15*
IF THE JOB MARKET GETS TIGHTER, WHICH OF THE SKILLS YOU HAVE NAMED WILL BE MOST VALUED?
(n=48)

FUNCTIONAL	43	Skills mentioned more than once: communication, interpersonal skills, analysis, writing, verbal ability, research, and ability to sell.
ADAPTIVE	31	Skills mentioned more than once: good self-presentation, aggressive, energetic, sensitive, assertive, quick learner, articulate, and a desire to work.
TASK-SPECIFIC	6	None mentioned more than once.

*This table appeared in the Results section of this resport as TABLE V.

As the numbers indicate, most employers named more than one critical skill, but the preference for the non-technical skills as being most important is clear.

d. What Advice Would You Give to College Graduates?

In Section VI the employers' advice to educators was sought. In this final quesition of the interview employers were asked to speak directly to students, offering them the benefit of their perspective on the employment situation. The quality of the responses requires more than a simple listing of the various points that were made. Almost every employer had a thoughtful response to give; many had already spoken about this question to students or counselors, but many others were eager for the opportunity to share their point of view and their recommendations. The flavor of their remarks is evident in the following excerpts:

> "One angle to make liberal arts students more employable is to encourage them to think how their background and abilities would be helpful to a potential employer. It's a bit frightening to think of one's job future simply in terms of skills to be acquired and marketed. My feeling is that is someone has an interest in a particular field, then that interest in itself is attractive to employers. And the students should look at a job in terms of how they can contribute their special abilities."

> "Look for a company with a training program and get information about them. Talk to people in personnel, construct a questionnaire based on what you are looking for and send it to personnel officers. make phone calls and send letters saying you're interested in the training program and would like to lean more about it. Those inquiries impress personnel officers and usually lead to an interview. After the interview, follow it up. That shows interest."

> "The big key is getting practical work experience. Ask questions, ask, ask, ask. Don't pretend you know it all. Get involved in community organizations. Use others as resources to help solve problems. Establish a positive rapport with others. You don't have to like everyone; it's a business relationship."

> "Do your homework. Make an assessment of your real, marketable skills. Be as flexible as possible on what you will do. Understand an initial job does not have to be a career decision, but rather it provides a panoramic view of the world of work. Get exposure and acces to work, jobs, whereever you can. Finally, set your career goals and focus on the specifics."

In order to help students reflect on this advice, we have synthesized the employers' responses under the following headings:

1. Job Search Strategies
2. Career Planning and Preparation
3. The Value of Experience
4. Skills to be Developed: adaptive, functional and content

Table 16
EMPLOYERS' ADVICE TO STUDENTS

1. JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Application & Interview Preparation

Know about the company
Prepare for the interview
Talk to people in the company
Know what the job is like before you apply
Build your application around the hiring criteria of the company
Submit a fully complete application
Prepare a decent resume

At the Interview

Ask questions
Demonstrate honesty
Be aggressive, business-like, natural
Don't try to impress people
Know what you're talking about
Discuss your reservations about the job

After the Interview

Communicate with co-workers before taking a job
Follow up the interview by reviewing your own goals
Take the job only if you feel good about it

In General

Develop a questionnaire to gather job information from companies
Make phone calls and send letters of inquiry about training programs
Be patient for a position in your field. It will open up.
Get better counseling
Know what jobs and fields are open
Know about the technical difficulties in the field
Don't get frustrated--seek until you find
Start at the bottom and work your way up
Be persistent
Remember that a first job is not a career commitment

Table 16 continued

2. CAREER PLANNING

Prepare for a career early
Research the options in the field
Don't have high expectations about money and positon
Know that the business world values initiative, efficiency and results
Have a marketable speciality, but don't be over-specialized or you will be less attractive as management material
Realize that companies promote from within
Try to stay flexible even as you specialize
Plan to get a Master's degree
Get the right basic skills
Find good professors and study with them
Know what you want to do and where would be the best place to do it
Have goals for each experience and analyze what you have learned
Assess your marketable skills
Be ready to sell your skills
Learn to present yourself in a business-like way
Know yourself
Set your goals but keep your options open
Determine your interests and then try to develop a number of skills within that framework
Decide where you want to live, and how willing you are to accept less pay to be in that area
90% of a job is not glamour but tedious work

3. THE VALUE OF EXPERIENCE

Work other than coursework is important
Get some practical experience that is relevant to the field
Get experience working under a deadline
Get involved in campus activities
Be a volunteer
Get experience in making public presentations
Know that companies are not trainig grounds--they want experience
Take an internship or work in the field in the summer
Make contacts in the field

4. SKILLS TO BE DEVELOPED

Adaptive
Be flexible; don't restrict yourself
Don't overestimate or underestimate yourself
Don't get frustrated
Be willing to ask questions
Establish a positive rapport with others
Be willing to work up from the bottom
Realize the importance of "image"
Be realistic
Develop patience and sensitivity
Develop personal and intellectual flexibility
Trust your feelings
Develop your own work ideals

Table 16 continued

Functional

Develop writing skills
Learn about task analysis
Learn communication and social skills
Have good English and basic math skills
Take courses that make you conceptualize
Learn about organizational behavior
Learn orderly approach to research and analysis
Get group process and facilitation skills
Learn to organize ideas
Learn to think critically

Content

Take courses in art work; printing; typesetting; computers; typing; public speaking; marketing; technical writing; curriculum design and development; publishing; bookkeeping
Take more people-oriented courses--sociology, psychology, drama, history, geography

APPENDIX C

POSTSECONDARY EDUCATOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY

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APPENDIX D

Far West Laboratory
for Educational Research and Development

Employability Skills Questionnaire
October 1982

The Far West Laboratory project staff believe that the results of this study are important and should be considered by general studies faculty members when developing course designs and activities. But we are also aware that colleges and university studies have many purposes other than developing potential job applicants and that there are often difficulties in making use of new information. The questions below are intended to help generate information about the potential usefulness of the study's outcomes and how the outcomes can be used by postsecondary faculty.

1. Should developing employablity skills of general studies graduates be a major concern of faculty members?

2. Do you feel that developing employability skills of general studies graduates is a concern for other faculty members in your

   department? _____
   institution? _____

3. Do the study results offer any information that could stimulate stronger interest in employability development for students in the general studies curriculum?

4. What is your reaction to the employers' perceptions of needed skills?

5. Should instructors be concerned with the development of these skills? Please elaborate in terms of which skills are most appropriate for which courses in the general studies curricula.

Making use of new knowledge usually requires additional effort, a commitment to the potential effectiveness of new ways of doing things, and may require technical assistance or other additional support. The last two questions have to do with making use of the information to improve/modify course designs. As planners, policy makers, and experienced instructors, what insights would you offer?

6. To what extent are your opinions on the appropriateness of these skills as planned course/department outcomes shared by colleagues?

7. What recommendations would you make to colleagues concerning how to design courses in the general studies so as to enhance employability skills?

8. What kinds of barriers or conditions exist that will impede the adaptation of courses to emphasize employability development?

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